

Youth Training and Employment Programme The Gambia



SOS CHILDREN'S
VILLAGES
UNITED KINGDOM

JULY 2020



Students and teaching instructors at the Training Centre, Basse

12 Month Update Report For The PD Foundation

THANK YOU TO THE PD FOUNDATION

In July 2019, The PD Foundation generously committed to funding 60% of a five-year youth employability project in the Upper River Region of The Gambia. The first instalment of £105,786 was received in July 2019.

The five-year project will empower 1,000 young people with training and employability skills to help them build sustainable livelihoods.

Following the six-month update report, we submitted in January 2020, we are pleased to report on progress made between January and July 2020.

LEADERSHIP RESPONSE: ALISON WALLACE, CEO SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES UK

Over the first year of project implementation, we have made significant progress and met some key milestones including completing the refurbishment of the training centre, building strong community engagement and securing accreditation from the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA), which ensures that young people have nationally recognised qualifications.

While a lot has been achieved, the global outbreak of COVID-19 has impacted the programme and the centre has been closed since 18 March 2020. SOS Gambia has been working to progress the elements of the project that can be done remotely such as having brought forward the development of the Project Steering Committee from Year 3, after recognising the need to keep key stakeholders committed and engaged.

Over the year, SOS UK has continued to work closely with SOS Gambia and specifically with the core project team. Since July 2019 we have had weekly calls with the team to provide remote support through the phases of implementation. Over the year, we have built a strong partnership with the team, the value of which has been made even more apparent during this global pandemic.

SOS UK is invested in programmes in The Gambia, with the Youth Training and Employment Programme being one of our key long-term strategic programmes, as well as SOS UK being responsible for underwriting the costs of the Basse Children's Village. To promote a nationwide strategic response to youth employment in The Gambia, we have been working with SOS Finland, who is also implementing a youth employment programme in the Central and Lower River Regions of the country. We have been coordinating our approach, sharing reports and updates. We had discussed the potential value of a joint programme visit by SOS Finland and SOS UK to The Gambia, however, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 all travel plans are on hold for the foreseeable future.

To ensure better coordination between the Promoting and Supporting Associations (such as SOS UK), the West,

Central and North Africa (WCNA) Regional International office and SOS Gambia, we have been arranging monthly calls to promote better communications and a strategic approach to programme development.

Alongside these monthly calls, SOS UK has been working with the WCNA Regional International team, to support the strengthening of leadership capacity at SOS Gambia.

The Trustees of SOS UK are required to review any safeguarding incidents in The Gambia and safeguarding of staff, children and young people who participate in our programmes is a priority for SOS UK. In line with this, SOS UK has supported the investment of safeguarding capacity in SOS Gambia to further strengthen their approach.

I would like to thank The PD Foundation for your continued support and understanding, specifically since the outbreak of COVID-19. We will continue to update you on the situation as it develops in The Gambia and I look forward to working together to ensure the programme remains relevant for young people in the Upper River Region of The Gambia.

PROGRESS JANUARY – JULY 2020

OPENING THE CENTRE IN FEBRUARY 2020

Following the extensive refurbishment of the training centre to ensure the facility was fit for purpose and in line with the requirements set out by the National Accreditation and Quality Assurance Authority (NAQAA), in January 2020 we submitted the relevant documentation to NAQAA for the accreditation of the centre and curricula.

There were elements of training which could be delivered to students while we were going through the process of accreditation with NAQAA. The orientation of students began on 13 January 2020 and as part of this programme, students were provided career guidance and counselling.

SOS Gambia has a well-established relationship with NAQAA and the Regional Mother's and Adult Training Centre (RMATC) in Bakoteh is known for delivering high-quality training. Based on this reputation and given that many course curricula have been adapted from the RMATC, SOS Gambia received verbal confirmation from the CEO of NAQAA that the accreditation will be processed for the centre and curricula and was given permission to start delivering the training. **The centre began delivering the training courses on Monday 3 February 2020.**

ACCREDITATION

Since January 2020 the SOS Gambia team have been in frequent communication with NAQAA to follow up on the accreditation documentation. COVID-19 also slowed the process as many NAQAA employees were working from home, with decision-making committees unable to meet.

SOS Gambia received written confirmation of accreditation for the training centre and curricula from NAQAA in July 2020.

Accreditation certificates are valid for three years after which SOS Gambia will need to go through a process to renew it. Written confirmation of accreditation for the PC and Mobile Repairs course is outstanding, as this is a new course which is not delivered at the RMACC the paperwork will take longer to process. The permission to continue delivering the training while the registration paperwork is being processed is still valid.

Instructors have also gone through the accreditation process and were interviewed by NAQAA in March 2020 following which the instructors submitted the relevant documentation. Instructors are permitted to continue teaching while they are waiting for their accreditation to be processed.

The SOS Gambia team have continued to be in frequent contact with representatives at NAQAA, following up with the outcome of the PC and Mobile Repairs paperwork along with the confirmation of accreditation for the instructors.

REGISTRATION OF STUDENTS

Nearly 350 applications for training were received, all applicants were assessed through a written test and a face-to-face interview. By February 2020, we confirmed the registration and enrolment of 211 students. We aimed to register five per cent more students than the planned cohort size of 200 as from SOS Gambia's experience there is a likelihood of a percentage of students dropping out as training progresses.

Recognising the additional barriers that young women face in accessing training, the project aimed to have each cohort of students to have at least 60 per cent female students. We have successfully reached this indicator in Year 1 of the project with young women making up 61 per cent of the student cohort. Below is a breakdown of the gender split across the five courses offered:

Course	Female	Male	Total
Literacy and Craftwork	29	13	42
Sewing	29	12	41
Social work	12	15	27
Catering and Hotel Management	44	4	48
PC and Mobile repairs	14	39	53
Total	128	83	211

As part of the community outreach work to promote the centre and invite applications, the team conducted a visit to the Rural Support Organisation for the Disabled (RSOD)



Students attending PC and Mobile Repair training, Basse

Centre. As a result of this outreach activity, we enrolled six young people with disabilities for training at the centre. The SOS Gambia team continues to engage with the RSOD Centre as part of stakeholder meetings.

TRAINING CENTRE COMMITTEES

To ensure the smooth running of the centre two specialised committees have been set up to support staff and students.

The Pastoral Care Committee is led by the Social Work Instructor and supported by Muhammed Jobarteh, the Project Coordinator. The purpose of the committee is to identify and provide additional counselling services to students on an individual basis.

The Academic Committee was established and tasked with reviewing timetables and developing lesson plan templates to be used by all instructors. The committee will support in identifying the learning needs of students and provide the appropriate support to enhance their learning. The committee is comprised of the Literacy Instructor, Literacy Assistant and the Sewing Instructor.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT MEETINGS

Keeping communication lines open and updating stakeholders will help to ensure a smooth transition of the management of the centre to the community. Muhammed Jobarteh, the Project Coordinator and Ellen Maraizu, Programme Director have led visits to the offices of the Governor of the Upper River Region, Chairperson of the Area Council, Regional Education Directorates, Health Directorate, Social Welfare, Youth and Sports Ministries as well as the Regional Police commander (who is an influential figure in the region).

Two regional stakeholder meetings have been held in October and December 2019. Since the last stakeholder meeting in December 2019, Muhammed Jobarteh and Ellen Maraizu have continued to update stakeholders on the progress made at the centre.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The first case of COVID-19 in The Gambia was reported on 17 March 2020. The Gambian government ordered all universities, schools and training facilities to close as well as for all gatherings of large groups to cease. In line with government advice, the training centre in the Upper River Region closed, with students travelling back to their villages, as well as some staff travelling to Banjul before further travel restrictions were put in place.

All preventative measures have been followed by staff at the centre, the priority being the health, safety and wellbeing of all our staff and students.

The training was delivered for six weeks before it was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. All 211 students while receiving training in their respective areas, also attended basic mathematics and English lessons.

The lockdown has continued, with restrictions being extended after each 45-day period. The number of COVID-19 cases in The Gambia is increasing and there is only one facility in the country with the capacity for COVID-19 testing. The weak medical infrastructure has meant that the Government has had to focus on prevention to ensure those infected can access medical attention when needed.

OUR RESPONSE TO COVID-19

SOS Children's Villages responded across the Federation based on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) recommendations. In The Gambia, emergency preparedness plans were put in place and SOS staff in The Gambia followed the recommendations of their national health authorities.

The SOS Gambia Emergency Committee, which includes members of the National Management team, have been meeting regularly to assess the situation and an emergency preparedness plan is being followed as per SOS protocols. The core project team meet regularly to review project-specific risk assessments and contingency plans, these have been shared with The PD Foundation.

SOS Gambia staff have been working from home. This has presented some challenges as not all are set up with reliable internet connections and have to deal with electricity outages, but SOS UK has been working on ways to best communicate with the team and to provide them with any additional support they need in these challenging times, this has included the increasing use of WhatsApp to communicate.

REMOTE LEARNING

To try and mitigate the delays in teaching and training, teaching staff tried to use existing messaging platforms such as WhatsApp which is popular among students.

At the start of lockdown restrictions in March 2020, teaching staff created 'WhatsApp Groups' for their respective courses, through which they shared lessons and provided students with the opportunity to ask questions through agreed online session times.

There was some engagement from students at the start of the lockdown and there were 139 students who were engaged over WhatsApp. However, maintaining engagement through this platform proved challenging as the lockdown continued.

The SOS Gambia team were aware of the challenges of trying to keep students engaged through web-based applications such as WhatsApp, as data plans are expensive in The Gambia and families often share a smartphone, compounding this is unreliable network connections in rural areas. With most of the courses designed to be delivered through practical learning methods, there were limitations to what could be achieved.

In May 2020, the SOS Gambia project team followed up with students individually through phone calls to reassure them that the centre will reopen once it is deemed safe by the government. The conversations with students showed the additional difficulties that families and young people were facing due to lockdown. Conversations with students made the project team aware that there is likely to be a higher dropout rate than anticipated, due to the impact of the pandemic and resulting restrictions have had on vulnerable families and young people.

To try and mitigate this risk the project team plan to start making direct calls with students monthly to ensure continued engagement. Alongside this, once restrictions are eased, the project team will visit the homes of those students identified as 'high-risk of drop-out' to encourage them to return to training.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

BASELINE STUDY

As reported in the six-month report an independent consultant was hired in November 2019 to undertake the baseline study for the project and to provide training to the SOS Gambia project team to ensure that they have the capacity to undertake a thorough and robust internal mid-term review. The baseline study included data collection to verify assumptions made during the project design stage, including market-relevant technical skills, social and life skill indicators of young people.

The baseline study has been finalised and the recommendations have been discussed at project meetings to ensure that where possible recommendations are addressed by the project.

Results of the baseline study demonstrate that young people in the Upper River Region of The Gambia are



Students at the training centre during orientation, Basse, January 2020

vulnerable and have limited skills, limited access to entrepreneurship training, financial services and counselling services.

The lack of or inadequate access to start-up capital for businesses as well as the lack of market-relevant training were identified as significant barriers to securing employment in the region.

BASELINE STUDY REVIEW MEETING

Once the baseline study was finalised, SOS Gambia held a programme review meeting with the SOS Programme Development Unit to ensure that the outcomes and recommendations of the baseline study are in line with the project objectives. Overall, the findings from the study are in line with the project design and objectives.

The review meeting generated a proposal for the gradual incorporation of changes that will make the programme more relevant to the local needs of the area. Minor changes to the programmes such as incorporating food processing into the Catering and Hotel Management course and adapting the Sewing course to Fashion Design through a focus on creativity and design have been proposed and reflected in the COVID-19 scenario plans which have been shared with The PD Foundation.

The recommendations of the study were based on the local environment before the outbreak of COVID-19. While the situation is still evolving in The Gambia, we can be certain that the employment market and employment opportunities will change.

A market survey will be done to assess the employment market post-COVID-19 to ensure that the training courses that are offered through this project continue to be market relevant.

PROJECT REVIEW MEETING

SOS UK had planned a monitoring and project visit to The Gambia. However, due to COVID-19, and the travel restrictions imposed we were unable to undertake a

monitoring visit. In place of a physical visit, we arranged a remote programme review meeting which was held on 7 May 2020, which included a budget review and an assessment of outstanding project activities for Year 1 of the project. As a result of this meeting, SOS UK and SOS Gambia agreed to develop two scenario plans looking at the impact of COVID-19 on project implementation. One scenario looked at a potential six-month no-cost extension and the other looked at a 12-month extension scenario which reviewed project activity alongside a re-forecasted budget. These were submitted to The PD Foundation in July 2020.

PROGRESS AGAINST INDICATORS: YEAR 1

Indicator title	Year 1 Progress	End of Project indicator
% of trained young people on vocational skills.	20% (based on the number of students enrolled)	1,000 students
% of target beneficiaries who need psychosocial support are provided with this service.	20% (based on the number of students enrolled)	100%
% involvement of relevant stakeholders in promoting the initiative	100% (all key stakeholders have actively participated).	80%

SUSTAINABILITY

Muhammad Jobarteh and other project staff continue to reach out to partners through meetings with the Chair of the Village Development Committee, the Village Youth Leader and the Deputy Governor of the Upper River Region.

The project team continues to maintain relationships with stakeholders and have met with the Regional Education Director, The Regional Health Director in March 2020 and a visit to the Alkalo (Village Head) of Manneh Kunda (a village in Basse).

These visits have promoted a sense of community ownership over the programme and building trust within the community.

Building strong relationships with the community is key to ensuring a strong commitment to the long-term outcome of the programme, and hence for young people in the region.

PROJECT STEERING COMMITTEE

The Project Steering Committee is an integral part of the sustainability plan for this project. Due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 and to maintain the

trust of the community and reassure them that the centre will reopen, and the project will continue to be delivered once the government lifts the restrictions.

To continue building strong relationships SOS Gambia have had discussions with the Governor of Basse, the Chair of the Area Council, the Chair of the Village Development Committee and the Head of the Village Manneh Kunda.

The Terms of Reference for this committee are being developed and are being reviewed by the SOS Gambia Programme Development team and by the WCNA Regional International Office.

PLANNING FOR YEAR 2 OF THE PROGRAMME

COVID-19 has been an unprecedented challenge. As we have seen globally, access to education and training has been impacted due to government restrictions which have been enforced to try and prevent the spread of the virus. While many families have been able to adapt and utilise online learning platforms, this has not been an option for the vulnerable rural young people that we have been working with as part of this project.

The lack of technology infrastructure in The Gambia means that internet access and connectivity is not just a challenge for young people enrolled on the courses, but also for teaching and project staff who must rely on home networks. As the pandemic evolves in The Gambia, SOS Gambia is going through robust planning assessments to ensure that all programmes are addressing the post-COVID-19 environment and context.

While COVID-19 has presented challenges, the SOS Gambia team, with support from SOS UK, have been moving forward elements of the project which can be managed remotely. We have also gone through robust risk assessments and scenario planning. As COVID-19 continues to evolve in The Gambia, we plan to continue to revisit project plans and assess where changes need to be made to ensure we reach the overall objective of this project.

As part of this planning, The SOS Gambia core project team will lead an assessment in August 2020 to discuss how the project may need to be adapted to meet health and safety requirements when the Government allows training centres to reopen. Areas that will be reviewed:

- How to maintain social distancing at the centre (class sizes, delivering the courses on a rotational basis etc.)
- Hygiene and sanitation including personal protective equipment for staff and students.

An average of 144 hours of learning has been lost for each of the course areas. Once we have an indication of when training centres will be allowed to reopen, we will review the curricula delivery plans to ensure the project objectives



Youth Training and Employability Centre, Basse

are met. To address the changing context of the employment market in The Gambia, partnership and collaboration between cross-sector stakeholders is vital. SOS Gambia has been working to develop partnerships with other INGOs and civil society organisations working to address the high youth unemployment rates in The Gambia.

SOS Gambia is part of a Regional Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which is comprised of heads of Government Agencies, NGOs, UN and Community Based Organisations working to address youth unemployment in The Gambia. Through this government initiative, they would like to ensure the coordination of all agencies working in development.

Through the TAG, SOS Gambia participates in quarterly meetings which provide opportunities to discuss local funding opportunities, strategic collaborations with existing government and non-governmental programmes and projects.

Stakeholder meetings which have been held in partnership with other regional SOS programmes in the Upper River Region included TAG members.

SOS Gambia is scoping whether other TAG members are undertaking specific research on the impact of COVID-19 on the employment market and opportunities of employment for young people and whether or not any of that research can be shared and utilised by SOS Gambia to inform any potential changes to the project design.

BUDGET OVERVIEW

The following changes have been approved by The PD Foundation (October 2019):

- The re-allocation of the rent line for Year 1 towards these refurbishment costs and the re-allocation of the remaining rent (covering Years 2-5), to be added to our funding request in Year 2.
- Taking 100,000 GMD out of the maintenance line to add to the refurbishment line in Year 1, leaving the project with 100,000 GMD to cover any maintenance costs that might be incurred later in Year 1.

- Combining the rent and maintenance reallocations within the project budget provided 1,100,000 GMD (£18,130) of the total amount needed for the refurbishment and fence (the total being £31,711).

SOS UK are funding the remaining 823,992.50 GMD (£13,581) needed for the refurbishments. Re-allocating the rent amount helped us to recover some of the refurbishment costs and allowed us to allocate our limited unrestricted funds towards other urgent costs.

The project burn rate for Year 1 of project implementation is 76%. The delays in the project start, teacher recruitment and the impact of COVID-19 mean that there is an underspend for Year 1. However, we have recognised the full value of the project budget portion of the refurbishment expenditure incurred in Year 1, in line with the scenario reforecasts shared recently.

In terms of Year 2 funding, we propose to carry the amount saved over to Year 2 and therefore Year 2 funds to be transferred to SOS UK would be reduced by The PD Foundation proportion of the underspend amounting to £24,361, combined with the slight reduction in Year 2 from the new forecast.

Revised year 2 funding	£86,093
Proportion of year 1 underspend	(£24,361)
Year 2 transfer	£61,732

We have attached the 12-month financial expenditure report.

LESSONS LEARNT

PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY

Due to COVID-19 and the centre closure we recognised the need to continue working with the Village Development Committee and stakeholders to reassure them of the commitment of SOS Gambia to continue with the project. As part of this, we have bought forward the activity related to the Project Steering Committee, we have started working with stakeholders to draft a Terms of Reference for the Steering Committee.

It is planned the committee shall comprise of the following members:

- Chair of the Basse Area Council,
- SOS Children's Villages Manager,
- Chair of the Village Development Committee,
- SOS YEP Project Coordinator,
- Regional Governor (or appointed representative),
- Director of Youth, Upper River Region
- Regional Social Welfare Director,
- Ellen Mariazu (Programme Director),
- Village Head of Manneh Kunda,
- Regional Health Director.

PERCEPTION OF COURSES

Through conversations with the community, the SOS Gambia team discovered some hesitancy from Muslim

families in the URR relating to Catering and Hotel Management. The tourism industry in The Gambia, while a key source of income generation, also has a negative connotation due to the well-reported exploitation of young men and women by some tourists. To combat this the project team plans to address some of the negative perceptions of tourism through the community outreach work.

INCREASED VULNERABILITY OF YOUNG WOMEN

Through conversations with young women enrolled on courses, the team has been made aware of the increased vulnerability of young women during the lockdown. A couple of young women reported that as they were now at home, their families could not continue supporting them, hence their marriages had been arranged. If the lockdown continues this may result in a high drop-out rate of young women. From global research, we know that women and girls are more at risk of gender-based violence and psychological stress during the lockdown.

Considering this, the project team will be encouraging primary caregivers and families to support the young women to continue with their training once the centre reopens. The core project team will speak to their SOS Gambia colleagues who have been running women's empowerment projects in the Basse area and discuss methods they could adopt to include gender sensitisation and awareness messaging during the phone calls with young women.

Once lockdown restrictions have eased, any young woman that has been identified as 'high-risk' of drop-out, will be visited by the project team. Young women will also be encouraged to access psycho-social support once the centre reopens.

Mariam's* story

Mariam lives in Nyakoi, a remote village in the URR. She was the first child of her parents and was born with multiple disabilities. Her mother was unable to deal with the stigma of having a child with disabilities, so her grandmother became her primary caregiver. Due to stigma and the lack of specialist care, Mariam was initially unable to attend school.

However, through the support for her grandmother she was able to secure a place at the local community school and her grandmother assisted her daily on her journey to and from school. Mariam flourished and continued her education till standard 9. Due to family circumstances, however, she was unable to continue her education

She didn't give up, to try and develop her skills further she enrolled at the RSOD Centre, where she continued to grow in confidence. During SOS Gambia's outreach work Mariam found out about the training centre and successfully enrolled on the Sewing Course. Mariam is able to use a specially made sewing machine so that she can participate in all the practical learning tasks. Mariam is very committed to learning and she is one of the most hardworking students at the centre and is very driven.

"I will always continue to thrive in whichever situation I find myself in. I would like to build a better future by developing my sewing and business skills." – Mariam, Sewing Course student at the YTEP, Basse

*Mariam's name has been changed to protect her identity

THANK YOU TO THE PD FOUNDATION FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT TOWARDS THE YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY PROGRAMME IN THE UPPER RIVER REGION OF THE GAMBIA. YOUR SUPPORT WILL HELP EMPOWER YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE REGION AND ENABLE THEM TO BECOME CHANGE AGENTS.



Governor URR and SOS Project Coordinator and Sewing Instructor, Basse



Sewing and design Class, Basse



Catering students attending a theory class, Basse